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The President's Daily Brief

May 14, 1976

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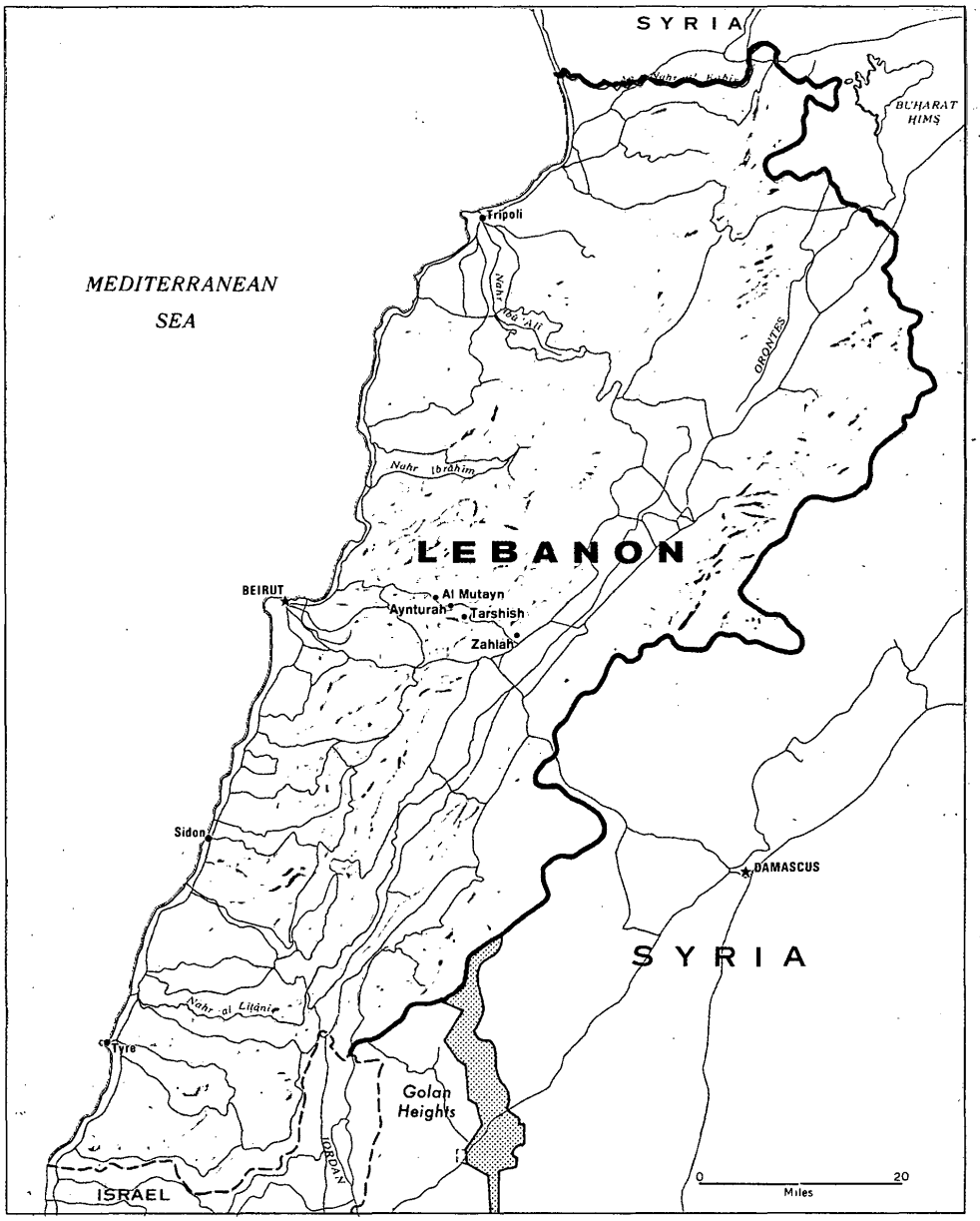

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LEBANON: *The refusal of Christian forces in central Lebanon to accept a cease-fire may cause a complete collapse of the truce in Beirut. Fighting in the capital has escalated every day this week as leftist and Palestinian forces have retaliated against a Christian drive on leftist-held territory in the central mountains.*

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Fighting in Tripoli between Syrian forces and Iraqi-sponsored Lebanese and Palestinian units resumed yesterday after a cease-fire arranged on Wednesday suddenly collapsed. The Syrians now seem intent on eliminating Iraqi agents and other local troublemakers and are pressing their attack on a number of leftist strongholds in the area.

The US embassy has learned that Syrian-controlled forces are also moving against Iraqi-backed militiamen in Sidon and Tyre. The

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trouble in these two southern cities has raised some concern in Israel that renewed tensions could cause incidents close to the Israeli border.

The rapidly deteriorating security situation has prompted Sarkis to cut short the traditional round of congratulatory visits and to concentrate instead on engineering a new truce. His efforts to work out a reconciliation with leftist leader Kamal Jumblatt apparently are making some headway. Jumblatt issued another statement yesterday in which he emphasized his admiration for Sarkis personally and explained that he had not backed Sarkis in the presidential campaign only because of Syria's endorsement of his candidacy.

We have no new information on Sarkis' contacts with Christian leaders, who at this juncture hold the key to salvaging the truce. A new round of rumors in Beirut that President Franjiyah intends to delay his resignation suggests that Sarkis may have a difficult time gaining concessions from the Christian leaders on any new cease-fire proposals.

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NOTES

The Syrians *appear to be ready to approve another six-month extension of the mandate for the UN observer force on the Golan Heights.*

The senior Syrian liaison officer to the UN force reportedly has told the UN commander informally that Syria will renew the mandate. The Syrians also have given private assurances to Iran, which has a contingent in the force, that Damascus has decided to approve another extension. 25X1

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Five or six Soviet *diesel submarines are apparently moving toward the Mediterranean.*

They probably will relieve some of the submarines now on patrol there, most of which have been away from home waters for about a year. This large-scale relief may mark a return to the six-month rotation cycle used by the Soviets until 1973, when they began making more extensive use of port facilities in Alexandria.

With the loss of access to Alexandria, the Soviets may now be compelled to rotate their submarines more frequently between the Northern Fleet and the Mediterranean, with a consequent reduction in patrol time for individual submarines.

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The Israelis *are bracing for another round of Arab demonstrations and terrorist incidents today and tomorrow.*

Prime Minister Rabin's adviser for Arab affairs told our embassy yesterday that Israeli security forces have been placed on alert to deal with possible trouble. He said they would not, however, be posted in Israeli Arab villages in order to avoid a repetition of the events on March 30, when the security forces in the villages quickly became the targets of Arab violer 25X1

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French

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FRANCE

Ten years after France's withdrawal from NATO, French defense policy still adheres to the Gaullist doctrine of national independence in defense matters. President Giscard d'Estaing has put his own imprint on the doctrine, however, by improving Paris' working relationship with NATO, by expanding the ability of French forces to respond to crises outside as well as within Central Europe, and by joining with his European partners in an effort to enable Europe to assume greater responsibility for its own defense.

Giscard recently re-emphasized that he is not seriously considering rejoining the NATO Integrated Command. He is encouraging a closer relationship with NATO and the US, but he is anxious to see that cooperation takes place on terms which recognize France, and Europe, to be equal partners in the Alliance.

One of the most significant aspects of France's defense policy under Giscard is the move toward a more diversified, more flexible military force capable of defending French interests in both Europe and other critical areas of the world.

Nuclear Weapons

Under Giscard, French strategy still emphasizes the importance of the country's nuclear deterrent force--the third largest in the world. France's strategic doctrine now centers, however, on the second-strike capability of its ballistic missile submarines. Plans to expand France's land-based intermediate-range ballistic missile force have been canceled, and those missiles already deployed have apparently been relegated to a less important role.

Giscard has modified former president Pompidou's policy regarding the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Previously, a presidential order to commit France's main battle force carried with it the authority to use tactical nuclear weapons. Giscard, however, has stated that when France's army is committed to battle it will have nuclear weapons but that actual release authority can only come directly from the president. Such a decision increases Giscard's military options and decreases the chances of an unauthorized or premature escalation into nuclear warfare.

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Conventional Forces

Giscard is stressing, to a greater extent than the Gaullists ever did, the need to strengthen the conventional forces by making them more flexible, mobile, and efficient. The recently announced decisions to reorganize the army and increase its share of the defense budget reflect Paris' continuing effort to achieve these goals.

Under Giscard, the French have begun to reorganize their fleet. Recognizing the increased importance of the Mediterranean and seeing an opportunity to show the flag in the waters near the Middle East, the French reassigned one of their two aircraft carriers to the Mediterranean last fall

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The French continue to maintain the largest Western naval force in the Indian Ocean. They view this fleet as vital to the protection of the West's oil supply and commercial sea lanes. Although Paris may be forced to abandon Djibouti--its only major naval base in the Indian Ocean--when the French Territory of the Afars and Issas becomes independent later this year, it will probably continue to maintain a sizable naval contingent in the ocean, possibly with the help of additional support ships.

Over the next five years, France also plans to modernize and strengthen further its navy by building the first of 20 planned nuclear-powered attack submarines, the country's first nuclear-powered helicopter carrier, a sixth ballistic missile submarine, and a number of nuclear-capable naval aircraft.

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